



Aaron Stockton
District Ranger
Naches Ranger District
10237 Hwy 12
Naches, WA 98937

Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board Input on the Little Naches Upland Restoration Project

Dear Ranger Stockton,

I write on behalf of the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board (the Board). The Board was created by 21 county and city governments and the Yakama Nation to promote the recovery of at-risk fish and wildlife species in the Yakima Basin. One of our primary goals is to support recovery of steelhead and bull trout, so that these species can be removed from the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) list. The Little Naches River is a priority area for steelhead recovery in the Yakima Basin.

We write to you today regarding the Little Naches Upland Restoration Project. Thank you for developing a project that balances different objectives and combines commercial timber harvest with watershed restoration and non-commercial thinning to develop resilient and ecologically beneficial forest stand conditions. We especially appreciate the use of stewardship contracting in this and other recent timber sales to ensure that the funds generated through logging return to support beneficial projects in those same watersheds.

We also appreciate your incorporation of suggestions received from us and other members of the Little Naches Working Group during the scoping period, including calls for expansion of non-commercial thinning and maintaining critical trail connections. This is a better project as a result. These substantive responses also demonstrate that community engagement is taken seriously by the US Forest Service.

While the project as proposed make a significant contribution to meeting restoration goals for the Little Naches watershed, significant additional work remains to be done. Priority work includes:

- Completion of an updated Transportation Analysis Process (TAP) for the Little Naches watershed that includes the recently and soon-to-be acquired private lands in the watershed;
- Ongoing road maintenance, improvement, closure and decommissioning to implement the TAP recommendations and create a sustainable road network that protects fish, wildlife and ecosystem values while ensuring needed public and administrative access to forest resources;
- Removal of remaining fish passage barrier culverts in the watershed;
- Restoration of tributary and mainstem instream, riparian and floodplain habitats that support native fish populations, including efforts to reduce the impact of the 1900 Road on the mainstem Little Naches.

We look forward to working with you on these projects in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Adam Fyall, Chair